Rabbi Hayim Palachi (1788-1869)

Rabbi Ḥayim Palachi (also Palaggi or Palacci) was born in Smyrna, Turkey in 1788. He was the grandson of Rabbi Yosef Ḥazan, the author of Ḥiqre Leb, and the disciple of Joseph Gatenio, author of Bet Yiṣḥaq.

In 1847 he became the *ab bet din* of Smyrna and of another six neighboring communities. In 1855 he was appointed Ḥakham Bashi of Izmir by the Ottoman authorities .

During his Rabbinate period he gave importance to social welfare; and as an important mission he thought of founding a Jewish hospital. He requested assistance from the wealthy Jews in town. With the help of respected Senior Leon Adut they contacted Baron Rothschild in Vienna and received the necessary support. He was also able to receive the support from Sir Moses Montefiore. The Jewish hospital was established. At the time, the population of Izmir was 220,000, with the Jewish population consisting of about 16,000 souls.

Rabbi Palachi's set a goal to maintain mandatory education to all Jewish children. He adopted a community law which required every Jewish father to give Talmud Tora education to his children. Children would continue their education until they were able to read and write properly, and could grasp the fundamentals of Tefila. Only the instructor was allowed to decide when the students had achieved the required educational goals. Rabbi Palachi made sure that all the poor children also received education.

Rabbi Ḥayim Palachi was very sensitive to events that affected Jews outside Izmir as well. During the blood libel in Damascus in 1840, he called for the support of his Egyptian Jewish friend Don Abraham Kamando, Baron de Rothschild and Sir Moses Montefiore. Through their intercession, the innocent Jewish victims in Damascus were exonerated.

(*Adapted from Rabbi Naftali Haleva, present day Rabbi in Istanbul, Turkey*)

This is a picture of the Izmir community in 1896. In the center, one can see rabbi Abraham Palachi (rabbi Ḥayim Palachi's son)

Rabbi Ḥayim Palachi was an extraordinarily prolific writer. He authored more than 70 works, most of them have been published. Many of his manuscripts were burned and a great number were not published. Most of his books contain in their titles his name, “Ḥayim” or “Ḥay”

*_Darke_ Ḥayim on Pirqe Abot.

*_Leb Ḥayim_ a, responsa, interpretations, and comments on the Shulḥan ‘arukh.

*_Nishmat Kol Ḥai_ , rabbinical responsa.

*_Ḥiqeqe Leb_ , homilies and eulogies.

Other books: _Nefesh Ḥayim_; _Tora ve-Ḥayim_; _Kaf ha-Ḥayim_; _Mo’ed le-Khol Ḥai_; _Ḥayim ve-Shalom_; _Sefer Ḥayim_; _Ginze Ḥayim, etc._